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8 February 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Sessions with the Secretary of Defense

1. One topic you might want to raise at your 9 February lunch with Secretary Richardson is his desires with respect to the weekly Indochina sessions I have held with his three predecessors.

2. As you know, this practice was started by Secretary McNamara -- at his instigation and request -- in October 1966. When Clifford (whom I had known in his incarnation as PFIAB Chairman) took office in February 1968, he asked that these sessions continue. When Laird (whom I had also known, though less well, through his membership on the House Armed Services Committee) took over in January 1969, he also specifically asked that these sessions continue -- as they did throughout his tenure as Secretary.

3. After my last session with Laird -- on Monday, 15 January 1973 -- Rear Admiral Murphy (Laird's Military Assistant) spoke to me about laying on my first session with Richardson. Per Mr. Helms' previously given instructions, I demurred, suggesting that if Mr. Richardson wanted these sessions to continue he give the Director (at that time, Helms) a call.

4. Dick's thinking -- with which I agreed -- was that, on several counts, it would be better for these sessions to continue only at Richardson's express request. Though Helms thought (correctly, in my opinion) the Indochina SecDef sessions had been of benefit to both the Secretary (institutionally as well as personally) and the Agency, one thing that had materially contributed to their atmosphere -- hence utility -- was the fact that they were conducted (in each case) at the Secretary's request and instigation, not ours. There was, thus, no hint or possible suggestion of pushiness from our side.

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5. Since 15 January, I have heard nothing further on this matter. Richardson may well not wish to continue this past practice -- either because he is less interested in Indochina than his three predecessors felt they had to be or for other reasons. Nonetheless, it might be a good idea to get this subject resolved, one way or the other, and a private lunch could constitute an optimum forum in which to raise it.

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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